

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

May 27, 2004

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA CONSERVANCY PROGRAM: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

File No. 04-024

Project Manager: Ann Buell

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$375,000 to the Greenbelt Alliance, acting through the Bay Area Open Space Council, to further the natural resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

LOCATION: The nine San Francisco Bay Area Counties (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Project Location and Site Map

Exhibit 2: Bay Area Public and Privately Protected Land Map

Exhibit 3: Open Space, Habitat, and Recreational Areas of Interest Map

Exhibit 4: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31164 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed three hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$375,000) to Greenbelt Alliance, acting through the Bay Area Open Space Council, to further the purposes of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. Prior to disbursement of any Conservancy funds, Greenbelt Alliance shall submit for review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a detailed work program, timeline, and budget; and the names and qualifications of any intended contractors.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria set forth in Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code (Sections 31160-31164) regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
 2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
 3. Greenbelt Alliance is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff requests authorization to disburse up to \$375,000 to Greenbelt Alliance, acting through the Bay Area Open Space Council (Council), to further the natural resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program (Bay Program) over a two-year period. The Council proposes to undertake several new, comprehensive projects while maintaining and continuing highly effective projects funded through previous Conservancy grants. Conservancy authorization of this proposal would allow the Council to continue partnership building around the San Francisco Bay Area through information exchange and dissemination, training, and resource and recreational needs assessment and analysis.

A collaboration of more than 50 public and nonprofit land management agencies and organizations, the Council has helped keep the Bay Program well-informed of regional needs and well-acquainted with the strengths and priorities of the Council members in an efficient and effective way. The leadership and strategic thinking of the Council have played a critical role in the growth, development, and success of the Bay Program and have helped it fulfill key requirements of its legislation. A listing of past Conservancy-funded Council accomplishments in support of the Bay Program goals can be found in the “Project History” section below.

A defining feature of the Bay Program is its emphasis on partnership—between levels of government, across jurisdictional lines, and involving both the public and nonprofit sectors. The Council’s current proposal contains more than ten interrelated elements that promote cooperative conservation planning and implementation around the region and therefore also help the Bay Program fulfill key requirements of its legislation. Bay Program staff actively participates in many Council activities, benefiting from the collaboration and helping to shape projects, as appropriate.

Upland Habitat Goals Study. The Council is currently reviewing existing sources of upland habitat data for the San Francisco Bay region, and working with a team of experts to develop a methodology and work program for undertaking an upland habitat goals study, thanks to a \$16,500 grant from the Conservancy in 2004 (using Resources Agency funding). After this preliminary work is completed around July of this year, the Council will begin to carry out the extensive research and writing of the report. The Council will use part of the requested funding to undertake the development of the report and will also seek matching funds to meet the full cost of the project.

Park Operations and Stewardship Needs Study. Of growing concern to the state and region is the question of how to take care of the park and other open space lands that are protected through

public ownership or conservation easements. The Council proposes to identify what it costs, at a summary regional level, to maintain and monitor existing parks and easement-protected lands, and to develop initial estimates of what it may cost in the future under broadly-defined operational and stewardship scenarios. These estimates would be developed using existing data, including California Department of Finance reports, as well as analyses prepared by selected representative agencies and organizations around the region.

Regional Trail Network Study. The Council has previously developed a GIS database depicting the existing and proposed regional trail network. The Council proposes to develop general cost estimates of what would be required to fully build and operate this system. To the extent possible, these cost estimates would be based on locally-generated information. Where local cost information is not available, the Council would develop estimates based on what it learns about costs for similar trails elsewhere within the region.

Regional Camping Facilities Study. In the early 1990s the Council did a demand survey of existing campgrounds in the Bay Area. From this survey it learned that the demand for family-style camping far outstrips supply during peak times. In this proposal the Council requests funding to identify plans, opportunities, and constraints for developing new family camping facilities. It will consider environmental, institutional, and financial constraints, and methods for overcoming those constraints. Additionally, it will develop recommendations for increasing the number of facilities and will suggest ways in which the Bay Program could help.

Environmental Education Study. Some agencies and organizations in the region have active and highly successful environmental education programs, and others do not, either because they do not know how to begin, or lack the financial resources, or both. The Council proposes to research and develop educational/training materials describing the scope and value of existing efforts, identify financial needs to maintain and expand such efforts, and develop recommendations for the appropriate role for the Bay Program in supporting environmental education.

Protected Lands, Trails, and Camping Databases. The Council and partners in the Bay Area have, over a period of many years, developed a database of protected open space lands that is highly regarded and widely used, including by the California Legacy Project of the Resources Agency, which incorporated this database into their statewide maps (Exhibit 2). This GIS-based system includes fee title as well as conservation easement protected lands, and covers the full range of federal, state, and local agencies and nonprofit organizations. The Council has also developed additional data layers covering the existing and proposed regional trail system, public and private camping facilities, and areas of interest based on open space, habitat, and recreational values (Exhibit 3). Included in this proposal is a request for funding to support further updates to this system, which is important to all of the other work of the Council, the Bay Program, and agencies and organizations involved in implementing specific projects.

Status and Trends Analysis. A prerequisite to developing regional goals is understanding what has been accomplished and where the region is headed. Approximately every two years the Council has prepared this type of overview, drawn partly from analysis of the baseline data collected by the Council and partly from interviews and surveys of the agencies and organizations active in the region. This proposal includes a request for funding to produce the next bi-annual status and trends report.

Database Enhancement (web-based mapping interface, media exchange, media outreach, networking database). All of the Council's baseline databases, as well as other reports and in-

formation resources, are made freely available over the internet (www.openspacecouncil.org). However, each database (protected lands, regional trails, transit outdoors, family camping) functions independently of the others, making it difficult and expensive to update information. Included in this proposal is a request for partial funding for development of a new web interface. The interface will be designed to also work for the protected lands databases that the Council is helping the Central Coast and Southern California programs of the Conservancy to develop. The cost of developing the interface is anticipated to be shared with these other regional groups.

Technical Assistance to Local Agencies and Organizations. The Council frequently provides training sessions and technical assistance to local agencies and organizations on a wide range of conservation topics and requests funding to continue responding to identified training needs. Examples include assisting cities develop local land conservation programs, training on conservation techniques, and advice on developing public-private conservation partnerships. Easements, in particular, have become a major part of the overall conservation focus in the Bay Area. Funding is requested to support the development of professional course materials focused on conservation easements. The actual courses would be self-supporting, and either provided collaboratively with partner agencies and organizations (to improve the technical skills of the professional consultants on whom they rely), or as part of ongoing third-party professional training programs.

Diablo Ridgeland Working Group. The Diablo Ridgeland Working Group consists of approximately two dozen agencies and organizations involved in the protection and stewardship of land resources in the Diablo Range extending from Pacheco Pass in the south to the Carquinez Straits in the north. The Council requests funding to continue (a) working with the ranching community on expanding the use of conservation easements, (b) developing better data on potential habitat corridors, and (c) researching, monitoring and formulating strategies to address the environmental impacts of the proposed high speed rail system and rural development.

Capacity Building for Solano, Napa, Alameda, and Sonoma Counties.

Solano County. The Council has previously worked with Solano County and the Solano Land Trust to develop park and open space goals for the county, and to identify options for expanded institutional and financial capacity. While a great deal of progress was made, progress was hindered by a lack of consensus within, and support from, the agricultural community. This proposal requests funding to continue this effort, with a particular focus on working with the agricultural community to develop consensus goals.

Napa County. With technical assistance from the Council, Napa County is developing county-wide park and recreation goals, with the aim of formulating new institutional and financial capacity to achieve those goals. A Board of Supervisors-appointed advisory committee has been charged with developing specific recommendations by the end of 2004, and implementation of those recommendations is anticipated to begin in 2005. This proposal requests funding to support continued technical assistance for this process.

Alameda County. The Council has convened an *ad hoc* coalition of organizations and interests in Alameda County, encompassing experts with agricultural, environmental and recreational backgrounds, to develop countywide goals and a specific strategy for funding implementation of those goals. The Council requests funding to continue providing leadership to this coalition.

Sonoma County. The enabling legislation that funded the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District expires in 2010, and the District is now beginning to evaluate options for what should happen next. The District has requested that the Council assist in identifying future needs and alternative strategies. While a specific role for the Council has not yet been determined, this proposal requests funding to help support the Council as it provides technical assistance to the District.

Information Exchange and Dissemination. To help the Conservancy meet the intent of the Bay Program legislation focused on cooperation and collaborative prioritization with other entities, this proposal requests funding for the following activities that promote clear information exchange around the region: preparing and printing the next two annual reports on the projects and programs that the Bay Program has supported; reviewing projects, reports and grant requests as appropriate to supplement and inform Bay Program staff analyses; and serving as a clearinghouse for ideas, information and proposals developed by the Bay Program staff; convening and leading meetings of the Easement, Stewardship, and Executive Committees of the Council, as well as the larger bi-monthly Council meetings, annual conference, and other Council-sponsored events. The Council additionally requests funding to allow its staff members to participate in other coalitions and events, including the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture.

Statewide Projects. The Council is very involved in the monitoring and sharing of information regarding issues of statewide importance. Over the past two years the Council has been working on the development of a statewide land trust council and requests funding to continue offering its leadership as this council is formed. Other issues that the Council would like to continue following so that it may share its strategic thinking with Council members at meetings and through memorandums are the recent concerns about the applicability of prevailing wage law to volunteers working on restoration and maintenance projects, questions about when and how environmental mitigation requirements can be applied to development projects, and technical and legal questions about the durability of conservation easements.

Site Description: The nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

Project History: The Council has played a unique role in the history of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program (Bay Program), beginning with the organization of a coalition of public agencies, nonprofit land conservation organizations, and environmental, business and agricultural interests that won passage of SB 104 establishing the Bay Program in 1997. The Council then took the lead in efforts to secure the initial \$10 million funding for the Bay Program (FY 1999/2000), followed by efforts to ensure funding for the Bay Program in Propositions 12, 40, and 50.

The Council has continued to support the Bay Program through its coalition-building and activities such as those currently proposed for funding. The Conservancy has authorized several grants to Greenbelt Alliance/Council in past years: 1998 (\$20,000), 1999 (\$42,000), 2000 (\$232,500), and 2002 (\$334,000). Those grants were matched by a total of approximately \$1.3 million, a 2:1 leverage of Conservancy funds. Work products, activities, and accomplishments from the period 1998 to the present include the following partial list.

- ❑ *Regional Needs Briefing Book, First-Year Report, Second-Year Report, Third-Year Report, Fourth-Year Report*, all focused on Bay Program goals and accomplishments.
- ❑ *Restoring Polluted Waterways of the San Francisco Bay Area* (2001).
- ❑ *The Diablo-Ridgeland: Protecting a Metropolitan Wilderness* (2002).

- ❑ *Status, Trends, and Visions 2002.*
- ❑ *The Evolution of Open Space Protection in the San Francisco Bay Area (2003).*
- ❑ *"The Next Million Acres,"* published in *Coast & Ocean*, Winter 2003-2004.
- ❑ Maintained, created and/or expanded Bay Area databases: protected and priority lands, trails, Transit Outdoors map, camping, networking, and web interface.
- ❑ Supported and advised counties trying to build land protection capacity (Napa, Solano, Contra Costa).
- ❑ Convened local and regional meetings and conferences, including the annual Council conference, now in its eighth year.
- ❑ Launched the diversity initiative to achieve better representation of Bay Area diversity in conservation work and park use.
- ❑ Supported the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Partnership, Diablo Ridgeland Working Group, and Coastal San Mateo Stewardship Partnership Program.
- ❑ Provided technical training workshops on land and trail protection around the Bay Area.
- ❑ Provided media news clips for Council members and reviewed projects proposed for Bay Program funding and participation.
- ❑ Reviewed and provided input into legislation and funding initiatives that would support conservation efforts.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$375,000
Other sources	<u>470,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$845,000

The Conservancy's contribution of \$375,000 is expected to come from the Conservancy's FY 02/03 appropriation from the "California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act of 2002" (Proposition 40) for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. This proposed authorization is consistent with the funding source because this project would carry out Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31164, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

As is evidenced in the lengthy and detailed "Project Summary" and "Project History" sections of this staff report, the Council has proposed more projects than in the past and is requesting more Conservancy funding than in the past. The requested funding amount is consistent with the increased level of work and lowered expectations for matching funds, given the current economic climate in the state. Anticipated matching funds totaling \$470,000 for this proposed project will come from various sources.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project is undertaken in accordance with Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31164, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

Section 31163(a) directs the Conservancy to cooperate with local and regional government bodies, nonprofit organizations, and other interested parties in identifying and adopting long-term resource and recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area, which shall guide the ongoing activities of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The present proposal would provide support for a collaborative organization of regional resource and recreational groups that greatly facilitates such cooperation.

Section 31163(b) directs the Conservancy to participate in and support interagency actions and public/private partnerships in the San Francisco Bay Area for the purpose of implementing subdivision (a), and providing for broad-based local involvement in, and support for, the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. In enabling Greenbelt Alliance to continue its support for the Bay Area Open Space Council, the proposed authorization would further this directive as specifically described in the “Project Summary” section above.

This project is appropriate for prioritization under the selection criteria set forth in Section 31163(c) in that (1) it is supported by a multitude of local and regional plans that call for coordinated action to protect open space and recreational opportunities for local and regional use; (2) it serves a regional constituency – the nine-county Bay Area; (3) it can be implemented in a timely way because many projects and all staff are already in place; and (4) it is anticipated to include matching funds that more than equal the requested Conservancy contribution.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective A** of the Conservancy’s Strategic Plan, the proposed project will ensure efficiency and coordination among agencies and organizations in the development of project priorities and an effective database for the San Francisco Bay Area. The Council facilitates continuous contact with all major partner organizations, participation in the San Francisco Bay Area Joint Venture, completion of a GIS database of priority areas and habitat corridors, and identification of areas underserved by trails, parks, and open space.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy’s statutory programs and purposes:** See the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
3. **Support of the public:** The Bay Area Open Space Council, supported by Greenbelt Alliance, comprises more than 50 public agencies and nonprofit land conservation organizations. Letters of support are included in Exhibit 4.
4. **Location:** The proposed project focuses on the entire nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

5. **Need:** Without the Conservancy's financial support, it would be difficult for the Council to keep in place the networks and relationships which make it possible to respond effectively to issues as they arise and to support the purposes of the Bay Program.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project has a regional scope, including all nine Bay Program counties.

Additional Criteria

8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The proposed project addresses natural resource, open-space, and recreational goals by working with local and regional government bodies and nonprofit organizations to identify needs and meet them, while also building regional financial capacity for projects that meet the goals of the Bay Area Program.
9. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
12. **Readiness:** The Open Space Council/Greenbelt Alliance is well positioned to conduct the project in a timely manner, as it has successfully carried out projects that further the purposes of the Conservancy and the Bay Program since 1991 and has earned the respect of its member constituents and funding agencies and organizations.
15. **Cooperation:** The Open Space Council/Greenbelt Alliance builds cooperation among regional agencies as a primary focus of its work and does so with its 50-strong membership of agencies and organizations.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed action does not have the potential for resulting in a physical change in the environment, and is therefore not a "project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as provided in 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15378.